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ABSTRACT

A program is described which combines multi-level grouping and individualized progress curriculum through teacher-prepared Learning Activity Packages (LAPs) in different subject matter areas. The organization and implementation of the program are discussed in detail, including goals of the program; placement of students at appropriate levels; general format of each LAP; grading procedures; administrative decisions concerning staffing, work loads, and utilization of classroom and library space; problems encountered with students and with teachers; and financing of the project. For related documents, see 015 194, SE 015 195, SE 015 196, and SE 015 197. (DT)

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THE NINETY SIX STORY

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THE NINETY SIX STORY

Ninety Six High School is located in a rural-textile community in the Piedmont area of South Carolina. The population of this independent school district is approximately 5,000 with 1,300 - 1,400 school age children who attend Ninety Six Elementary (enrollment 500), Ninety Six Middle (enrollment 460), and Ninety Six High (enrollment 380 - 400). The High School staff includes a principal, curriculum coordinator, assistant to the superintendent, counselor, librarian, twenty-four classroom teachers, two aides, one secretary, and three clerk-typists. The tax base is sufficiently broad enough to provide \$540.00 expenditure per pupil each year and the local supplement to teacher salaries ranks first in the state.

The innovative program of Ninety Six (South Carolina) High School is a combination of multi-level grouping and individualized progress curriculum through teacher prepared Learning Activity Packages. Planning for the program began in September, 1968, at the administrative and guidance level and continued in the Spring of 1969 with the inclusion of the library staff and some classroom teachers. During the 1969-70 school year, administrators and teachers visited schools using both multi-level grouping and individual learning units and final plans were made for the program to begin in September, 1970. Two three weeks workshops, for college credit and certification, were held during July, 1970 and 1971, during which a Ninety Six Format for the Learning Activity Package (LAP) was developed and teachers wrote LAPs in their subject area for use during the 1970-71 and 1971-72 school years.

Placement of students in the various levels was done on the basis of standardized achievement test results during the first year and was expanded to include student choice during the second year.

Funds to help with implementing the program have been provided by the South Carolina Desegregation Committee and Title III ESEA.

The goals of the program are to:

- (1) develop a multi-level curriculum which will provide for the diversity of achievement among students.
- (2) develop an organized system of individual progress which will embrace a diversity of learning rates.
- (3) raise the mean achievement level of all students.
- (4) develop a more positive attitude toward learning.

Flexibility in the program is achieved in both the grouping and instructional procedures. As was stated above, a standardized test was the basis for placement during the first year. Table I shows how the results of this test were used.

Table I

Level	Percentile rank on Standardized Test	Stanine
4	65-99% ile	7, 8, 9
3	40-64% ile	4, 5, 6
2	21-39% ile	2, 3
1	1-20% ile	1 or 2

Grouping during the second year of the program was primarily by student choice. Students had had one year's experience in the grouping procedure and were provided with written descriptions of intended goals, expectations, and characteristics of students at each level and with copies of their achievement test scores during the current school year. Individual guidance was provided by the counselor and teachers, and students were assigned to the level of their choice. Since traditional grade levels were not discarded, a numerical system was used to denote levels. This system is shown in Table II.

Table II

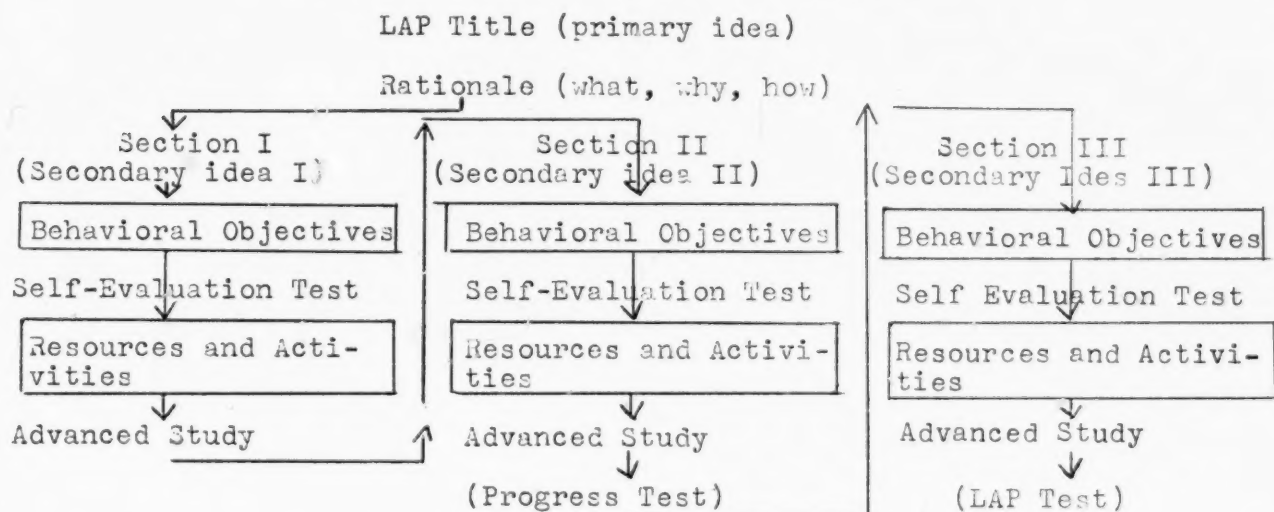
	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade	Goals, expectations and characteristics
Level 4	94	104	114	124	Well prepared students who plan further education after high school, who have better than average grades, who will do more than the minimum required work, and who score at stanines 7, 8, and 9 on achievement tests.
Level 3	93	103	113	123	Average students who may be interested in college, TEC school, or business training, who will do the average amount of studying, and who score at stanines 4, 5, or 6 on achievement tests.
Level 2	92	102	112	122	Students who need help on basic skills, who plan to enroll in vocational or business courses and who score at stanines 2 or 3 on achievement tests.
Level 1	91	101	111	121	Students who need special assistance, who plan to enroll in vocational courses and who score at stanines 1 or 2 on achievement tests.

During both the 1st and 2nd years, students have been moved from one level to another in both directions. This is not done indiscriminately but after consultation with teachers, students, and parents. Reasons for change of level include failure to succeed at a high level, frustration because of difficulty of work and lack of challenge because of easy work at a low level. Students are scheduled at different levels according to their capabilities in different subjects. For example, a student who is very capable in English and social studies but weak in math would be scheduled at a higher level in English and social studies and a lower level in mathematics. There is less deviation from a given level at the lower levels than at the higher levels. For example, students enrolled in Level 1 or 2 English are enrolled in Level 1 or 2 math, social studies and science. In general, Home Economics, art, Industrial Art (shop), music and physical education classes are heterogeneous and are not classified according to level.

Flexibility is an inherent characteristic of the instructional program which consists of highly structured, teacher written, Learning Activity Packages (LAPs). A comprehensive Scope and Sequence has been written by classroom teachers for each discipline. Each item in the Scope and Sequence is a topic which has been (or will be) developed into a LAP. Each LAP follows the same format which is shown in Table III.

Table III

LAP Format - Ninety Six High School



Each LAP may have as many or as few sections as are necessary to cover the primary idea. Each section may have as many or as few behavioral objectives as are necessary to cover the secondary idea.

The two most important parts of each LAP are the Behavioral Objectives and the Resources and Activities. Through these any degree of flexibility desired by both teacher and learner may be achieved. The teacher is free to prescribe for each individual learner and within the teacher's prescription, the learner is free to choose the resources and activities which he prefers.

The statement of Behavioral Objectives follows that described by Robert Mager in his book Preparing Instructional Objectives and includes all levels of objectives as described by Bloom, et al in Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Cognitive Domain. Included in

the Behavioral Objectives is a statement of how the student will be evaluated. Some of the methods of evaluation are teacher conference, small and large group discussion, oral and written reports, essays, themes, papers of varying lengths and, of course, written objective and essay tests.

The Resource and Activities part of the LAP lists all Resources to which the student may go to learn what he needs to know to reach the Behavioral Objectives. These resources include the basic textbook and several supplementary texts, reference books, audio tapes, filmstrips, and films. All Activities which will aid him in his learning are given. Any required Resources and Activities are checked and any additional ones which the teacher may prescribe are checked for individual students.

Evaluation procedures are clearly stated throughout the LAP. Each Behavioral Objective contains such a statement; i.e. "After completing your prescribed course of study, you will be able to state four causes of the American Civil War. You will demonstrate this ability in small group discussion and on the Progress Test." The small group discussion will be formed by students or teacher at a time agreed upon by both. The teacher determines the point(s) in the LAP where Progress Tests are most appropriate. (See Table III). The students ask for permission to take the written Progress Test whenever he has completed the required and prescribed activities and has indicated a readiness for the Progress Test through successful mastery of the items in the Self-Evaluation Test which is included in the LAP.

The Advanced Study Activities are included for those students who want to go beyond the minimum required work. These activities are related to concepts covered in the Behavioral Objectives and involve study in depth, creative work and other items of interest to some students but which could not be included in the required work because

of time or difficulty. Again flexibility is an inherent characteristic; some students may choose to undertake Advanced Study and others may not. Some teachers may require completion of one or more Advanced Study activities for certain students or for a specific quality grade.

Because the nature of the program itself introduced a totally different method of teaching and learning which we expected would be difficult for parents and students to accept, it was decided not to make any major changes in the way grades or progress was reported to parents. A traditional letter grade A, B, C, D, F system has been used for many years with report cards issued each six weeks. This system has been used this year on a new tear-away type of report which was designed to reflect the new curriculum and its requirements. A copy of the Progress Report is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
NINETY SIX HIGH SCHOOL

PERIOD COVERED

PROGRESS REPORT

Starting _____ Ending _____

Name _____ Subject _____ Course No. _____

Days Absent	Lap Range	Lap Number	Lap Test	Quantity	Quality	Average		Progress Grade	Semester Grade	Yearly Grade	Unit Credit	Teacher comments
	(4)	(5)	(3)	(1)	(2)							
Recycled												

ALL LAPS LISTED IN LAP RANGE MUST BE COMPLETED FOR A UNIT CREDIT

The Progress Report includes (1) a letter grade for quantity, which is determined by the amount of work the student has completed during the report period (regardless of quality), (2) a letter grade for the quality of work completed during the report period (regardless of quantity), and (3) a letter grade for any LAP test taken during the report

period. The Progress Report also shows (4) the LAP range for that particular subject and (5) the LAP on which the student is working at the time. These last two items provide parents with a gauge to the student's rate of working and indicate whether completion of the course is likely within the current school year. Since one of the unstated aims of the program is to eliminate failure, students do not progress to more difficult material until he has succeeded on the easier material. If he fails at the first trial, he re-cycles until he succeeds. Many recyclings may indicate the student is working at too high a level or is wasting time, "goofing off," and trying to get by without learning the material. Recycling is time consuming and will impede progress on the horizontal plane which may require extra time on the course. Recycling is also indicated on the Progress Report.

Two of the administrative decisions of greatest magnitude which have been made because of this innovative program have been a re-evaluation of (1) class room teacher, clerical and administrative staff and (2) use of existing space within the building. Since the staffing item was considered to be most important, the decision was made to expend funds on additional teachers, typists and an administrator and to use our existing space without additional expenditures.

Through the help of Title III, ESEA and Title 45, ESAP, the classroom teacher staff was increased so that no teacher who is writing LAPs has more than four classes per day. This gives the teacher two full class periods each day for writing. We have estimated an average of thirty - thirty-five teacher hours go into the writing of each LAP. This, of course, is in addition to the usual grading of papers, preparation, setting up labs, etc. which continue to be part of a teacher's day. Sufficient funds have also been available to periodically hire a substitute teacher to relieve for two full days while the regular teacher writes LAPs at school. Teachers prefer to write at school

rather than in their homes because all resources are at school. At the present time, the writing is proceeding on schedule; that is, teachers have the succeeding LAPs ready when the students are ready. Since revisions only are anticipated for all years following the current one, the teacher-time problem is expected to diminish each year. Title III funds will expire in May, 1974, and a return to a normal teacher load of five classes is anticipated at that time.

After the teachers have written the LAPs they must be printed in sufficient quantities to provide one copy for each student who will use it and to meet the requirements of the Title III project of supplying copies for each school district in South Carolina and for state evaluation. A clerical staff of three typists and offset machine operators is employed full time to fill this requirement and are paid from ESEA and ESAP funds. This staff will probably be reduced to two upon expiration of federal funds.

A full time Project Coordinator is also paid from ESEA funds. The Coordinator is the former principal of the school who helped develop the program as it is today. He is responsible for coordinating all writing and use of LAPs in the classrooms, for reviewing all LAPs for content and format, for dissemination, and for all record keeping connected with expenditures from the Federal Programs. It is expected that a Coordinator will be needed after federal funds expire and this cost will be assumed by the school district.

The program has increased the work load of the guidance counselor who has assisted in developing and coordinating the program. The nature of the learning environment on students has tripled the number of individual conferences concerning choice of courses and levels and learning difficulties. It is anticipated that an additional part-time counselor will be needed in the near future.

Two teacher-aides have been employed who assist in the Resource Center, Test Center and wherever needed. The library aide is essential to the operation of the program.

Since no additional space was available, the existing space has to be used to better advantage. An excellent traditional library which served as a place for books and quiet reading was already available. It was expanded (in function if not in space) to be a modern Resource Center with carrels for individual use of cassette players and filmstrips viewers, tables for group listening and viewing and storage of the increased number and kind of multi media and multi level reading materials. This was done with the addition of only one existing storage room to the library area.

The Resource Center is a beehive of activity during all periods of the school day. Purposeful use of the center has increased by 50% over other years and it is expected that additional space will be required when the total curriculum is developed into LAPs.

Because the structure of the LAP allows students to reach the Progress Test and LAP Test point at different times, whole class tests administration is inappropriate. This has necessitated establishing a Test Center where students write Progress and LAP tests for all courses in the curriculum which are taught with LAPs. The Test Center is open each class period and is staffed by a classroom teacher or aide. Students come to the Center from the subject teacher who indicates on a written pass what subject, section number and form of the test which the student is to write. The student writes the test in the Center using (or not using) whatever aids the test allows. The tests are returned by the Test Center keeper to the subject teacher for grading. All tests for subjects taught on LAPs are kept in the locked storage room in the Test Center. As each LAP is written, three

forms of all tests prescribed by the LAP are also written, printed, and placed on file in the Center. The tests must adhere to the behavioral objectives prescribed in the LAP.

Classroom space continues to be limited to non-flexible, thirty-forty student capacity, traditional classrooms. The need is being felt for space for small group work apart from the larger group and for a space for larger group sessions than are possible from any source other than local and these items are not top priority in the local budget at this time.

The success of the program at this time can be stated in terms of process only. The Title III ESEA timetable is being met; that is, at this time we estimate about 40% of the curriculum (Levels 3 and 4 in all grades) is being taught using LAPs with teachers writing to keep ahead of students. The timetable calls for 70% of the curriculum to be written into LAPs by September, 1972, and 100% by September, 1973. It is anticipated that we will adhere to this timetable.

Success in terms of student output cannot be evaluated at this time. A standardized achievement test administered to 9th grade students in March, 1971, in our school and in a neighboring traditional school is one of the criteria for evaluation. The same two groups of students will be tested each spring with the final evaluation of the results to come in the spring of 1974. An instrument measuring attitudes toward school will be administered to students in Ninety Six High School this spring and again in the spring of 1974. A follow-up of the 1974 graduates will be made to determine how many have entered post high school educational institutions and how many are enrolled in advanced college courses. The hypotheses which these evaluation devices will test are:

- (1) That students taught by the LAPs will score significantly higher on the standardized test than those taught by traditional methods.

- (2) That the students will develop more positive attitudes toward school.
- (3) That more students taught by LAPs will enter post high school educational institutions and will qualify for more advanced courses.

The greatest problem encountered in implementing the program has been in helping the students to assume their responsibility in their new role of learner. Almost every student was introduced to the LAP during the 1970-71 school year, was instructed in how to use it and was supposedly prepared for 100% exposure during the 1971-72 school year. While each student did not have a copy of the Scope and Sequence for each course, they were, at the beginning of the year, made aware of the LAP range of each course and of the estimated timetable for completion. The concept of total responsibility for working each day and of pacing themselves was an unfamiliar and uncomfortable one. This "freedom of choice" led many to choose to do nothing which was reflected in the quantity section of the Progress Report. Many teacher, counselor, and principal hours have been spent in parent conferences in an effort to solve this problem. Community meetings were held in the spring of 1971 and in the fall of 1971 after school began in an effort to avoid these situations but attendance was slight. More meetings are being scheduled in the near future to try to prevent further problems.

The Scope and Sequence for each course was established by classroom teachers using traditional textbooks and personal preferences as guides. Teacher intuition has influenced the amount of material included in each LAP. At this point, a re-evaluation of the number of LAPs required for each course and the amount of work in each LAP seems inevitable. It appears that successful completion of this curriculum as it is being written may require the average student more than nine months. Since a longer school year is impractical, the material may

need to be shortened. An accurate statement cannot be made at this time.

The greatest problem encountered with teachers has been in helping them to develop sufficient self-confidence to write LAPs without assistance. This probably stems from undue reliance on textbooks in previous years and in their narrow range of experience with supplementary resource materials within their subject fields. The "best" teachers in a traditional system are the "best" LAP writers in this system because they have a broader background from which to draw and have a variety of methods in their already good repertoire. At the present time, it appears that some teachers with many years experience may have difficulties in adjusting to this program. The teachers who seem to have less difficulty adapting are those with sufficient experience to feel confident in the subject matter but not enough to have firmly established more rigid classroom techniques.

Both students and teachers have experienced difficulties in learning to use the LAP. The student problems have been stated above. The teacher problems in the use of the LAP in the classroom have centered around trying to help each student individually and ignoring the continued usefulness of group activity. For example, the same question is answered thirty times for thirty individual students when it could have more efficiently been handled for the entire group. Many teachers have allowed students to pace themselves entirely and have not adequately monitored the work until the student was considerably bogged down. This may indicate a need for more supervision of teachers.

There have been no problems with financing. ESEA and ESAP funds have provided funds for staff and materials for printing. The school district has provided all additional funds for books, and equipment for the instructional programs. It is anticipated that the school district

will be able to handle the necessary financing when the federal funds expire.

The administration, faculty and Board of Trustees of Ninety Six High School are committed to the full implementation of this program in the school. Unless serious unforeseen difficulties arise, it will be continued after the expiration of federal funds. The groundwork is being laid to implement a similar program in the Middle School which feeds the High School. Some problems were anticipated but have not proved unconquerable. Favorable comments are coming from all who visit. Teacher training schools and State Department of Education officials are extremely enthusiastic and complementary. It is our belief that in the underlying concept behind the program is the future of public education in this country.

Acknowledgement

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